

Papaya

History

Papaya plants are thought to have started growing in southern Mexico and Central America. Spanish explorers took seeds from the papaya plants of Mexico and transported them to the Philippines, Malacca, India, and other South and Central American countries including Panama. In 1626, seeds were sent from India to Naples. The papaya was introduced to nearly all tropical regions.

Due to its wide-spread prevalence, the papaya has many different names. It is called *pawpaw* in Europe and Australia, *fruta bomba* in Cuba, *papaye* in France, and *mamao* in Brazil.

Varieties

The most popular variety of papaya is a solo, or Hawaiian papaya, and it is shaped like a pear. These papayas are about six inches long and weigh one pound. They are a yellow-green color on the outside and have a yellow-orange or pink flesh.

Mexican papayas are much larger than solo papayas. They typically grow to be two feet long and can weigh over 10 pounds. They are bright green on the outside and have a red or bright orange flesh.

Fun Facts

- The papaya is actually classified as a berry
- The black seeds in the center of a papaya are edible and have a spicy, peppery taste
- Papaya plants are not trees, but giant herbs
- Papaya plants can grow 6-10 feet in just 10-12 months
- Papaya seeds and leaves have been used for medicine in tropical cultures
- Papaya contains an enzyme, papain, that can be used as a meat tenderizer
- One serving of papaya will provide you with all the vitamin C that you need in a day
- Hawaii and Florida are the only US states that grow papaya
- Most papaya sold in the US is grown in Mexico



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